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**Strengthening the Liberal Arts Along the Pacific Rim:
The Pacific Alliance of Liberal Arts Colleges (PALAC)**

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ABSTRACT

While international alliances among research universities are relatively well established, the challenges for the small liberal arts college to execute a meaningful global collaboration can be much more difficult, due both to the much smaller size of the institution, its more limited resources, and its smaller and more intimate culture centered on undergraduate teaching and learning. A new alliance of liberal arts colleges known as the Pacific Alliance of Liberal Arts Colleges (PALAC) was established in 2021 with the purpose to better articulate the global components of liberal arts education, and to collaborate on key projects that will build collective capacity for student-centered liberal arts education that engages with the world's most pressing problems. PALAC contains nine of the best liberal arts institutions from across the Pacific Region, including institutions in China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Canada, and the United States. This essay describes the origins, motivations, and context of the creation of PALAC, its member institutions, and some of the initial projects planned by the new organization, and goals for global impact for PALAC.

Keywords: Liberal Arts, Global Higher Education, Asian Higher Education

A wide variety of consortial arrangements advance collective action among universities and colleges and have been a mainstay of the higher education world for many decades. Many consortia among colleges and universities are based on proximity, to enable easier exchanges and meetings among faculty and students. Examples include the Ivy League, the Claremont Colleges, the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA), the Northwest 6. These regional consortia enable deep engagement among the membership, and often include arrangements for athletics competitions, faculty exchanges, and joint curriculum development projects.

In recent decades, more expansive geographic ranges have been explored for consortia of research universities to span the globe. These include, among others, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), the Universitas 21 consortium, and the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU).

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These larger research universities have the capacity and funding levels to engage across the globe and to develop a stronger collective capacity to conduct high impact research on global challenges, and to share ideas on instructional approaches that are consistent with the missions of these universities.

While international alliances among research universities are relatively well established, the challenges for the small liberal arts college to execute a meaningful global collaboration can be much more difficult, due both to the much smaller size of the institution, its more limited resources, and its smaller and more intimate culture centered on undergraduate teaching and learning. Notable US consortia of liberal arts institutions include the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), which includes over 1000 private colleges and universities, and the Annapolis Group of Liberal Arts Colleges, which includes 180 of the leading private liberal arts Colleges, the American Association of Universities and Colleges (AAC&U).

These domestic US alliances are often too large to collaborate deeply in exchanges of students or faculty, but can provide collective advocacy, and serve to represent the interests of the broad number of institutions in their membership that share similar institutional missions. Examples can include AAC&U advocating for and advancing liberal arts within the US, and the Annapolis Group providing annual meetings for Presidents and Deans to discuss administrative strategies and leadership in the liberal arts. While these domestic consortia can discuss particular topics of interest for US liberal arts institutions, more global perspectives are generally absent from their membership and from their programs.

Consortia can be divided into different categories, based on their functions. Glazer-Raymo (2002) reviewed the nature of the 125 member consortia in the US, as identified by the Association for Consortium Leadership. These consortia vary in size from 3 to 100 institutions, and most can be grouped into categories such as technology-planning consortia (cooperating on IT issues and distance learning), business and industry-linked consortia (focused on workforce training and economic development), research and academic library consortia (gaining economies of scale in sharing electronic collections and interlibrary loans), and scientific research and development consortia (sharing resources to reduce the costs associated with research).

Some of the scholarly literature on consortia and alliances have stressed some of the fundamental principles needed for success in a consortium. Baus (1988) notes that the complex relationships among numerous disparate institutions calls for a “strictly maintained attitude of neutrality” in advancing the enlightened self-interest of institutions, while maintaining the limits of each institution as it works toward solving a problem with other institutions. Neal (1988) describes how consultations on teaching approaches and curriculum can be a particularly effective form of institutional cooperation, particularly in helping to promote best practices among faculty and recognizing excellence.

Fuller (1988) describes some of the early experience within the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA), founded in 1961 to advance the interests of liberal arts colleges in the Midwest. The GLCA worked together to promote off-campus study programs, by leveraging individual institutional connections to various international partners, and sharing these connections to provide a sustainable set of off-campus program abroad. The GLCA was also able to pioneer programs in women’s studies, and work collectively to solve problems for faculty development and the needs of untenured faculty within their group of institutions.

A longitudinal study of Educational Consortia (Keim 1999) provides a history of the major consortia and alliances over the 20th century and describes how these consortia evolved through phases of development according to a series of stages as described by Grupe (1975). These phases included a first phase of

exploration, which can be initiated by an individual, a second phase of planning, which ideally involves a committee of presidents and other representatives to assure the correct level of institutional support, and then a third stage of implementation. This final phase can include the development of an administrative structure, with a formal activation of programs as administered by an executive director. Keim (1999) also provides a thorough review of taxonomy of consortia among both US and international institutions.

From a study of 134 consortia located in the US, Canada, Costa Rica, Australia and other countries, and noted the increase in size of consortia from 1983 to 1996 by number of members, with an overall decline in the number of consortia, which included 64 percent that were founded in the period from 1961 to 1980. The most common governance structure for these consortia was a Board of Directors (40%), with the most common funding mechanism being a mix of dues and grants. Tadaki and Tremewan (2013) have documented how consortia can serve as a testing ground for new ideas among multiple institutions, and thereby provide a “transformative space” for educational change.

The consortium model can be especially necessary in bringing together international partnerships and the consortium has been a place where new practices of global collaboration can be tested and validated. In this way, the international consortium can also serve to mitigate the divergence and adverse consequences of globalization, by balancing the diverse cultural, political, economic and academic interests among the partners by providing new spaces and venues for cultivating the policies, leadership practices and economic ties that make international cooperation possible.

International alliances and associations among US universities and international partners also exist, and includes such consortia as the Association of American Universities (AAU), which brings together 61 institutions in the US and Canada, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), which includes 60 universities, representing 19 economies of the Pacific Rim, the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU), which represents 11 top-ranked research universities in nine countries, and the Universitas 21 organization (U21), which brings together 24 research intensive universities across the world. Additional consortia include the International Association of Universities (IAU), a UNESCO based open membership organization that includes nearly 600 member institutions, and the Worldwide University Network (WUN), bringing together 24 institutions in 6 continents for collaboration in research. International consortia of liberal arts colleges are much rarer, for the reasons mentioned above, and yet do exist.

Examples include a grouping of Asian liberal arts institutions known as the Alliance of Asian Liberal Arts Universities (AALAU), formed by Lingnan University in Hong Kong in 2017, which includes 28 institutions from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and India, and the Global Liberal Arts Alliance (GLAA), which includes 11 US liberal Arts Colleges from midwestern states, paired with 17 international liberal arts colleges from a disparate list of countries that include Ecuador, Hong Kong, Ivory Coast, Japan, Switzerland, Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Ghana, France, Nigeria, Egypt, Bulgaria and Greece. While both of these two alliances have pioneered transnational collaboration within liberal arts colleges, the two alliances are either distributed across the globe or concentrated in Asia, leaving an opening for a new alliance which can focus on engaging the wide range of nations and economies in the Pacific Region.

In Spring 2020, Bryan Penprase from Soka University of America, and Thomas Schneider from the University of British Columbia, discussed the idea of new consortium after dozens of zoom conversations with leaders of liberal arts institutions across the Pacific Basin. From these conversations, it became clear that there was a need for a consortium of liberal arts institutions from across the Pacific Basin to focus on

regional research projects and collectively create online and in-person programs and events, including fieldwork and student projects, shared instruction, and joint programs. The need for such a consortium was also clear since many of the new liberal arts institutions in Asia were founded in the past decade, and would benefit from a consortium that provides them with the expertise and leverage that could be provided by well-established US institutions.

As we described in our “concept paper” which was circulated to the Presidents of the PALAC institutions, the proliferation of the liberal arts college within Asia provided an opportunity for renewal and dialog of liberal arts globally. The liberal arts college, initially developed in the US, has been widely adopted across the world, particularly since 2000 in Asian countries, as the liberal arts college is seen to provide an innovative, student-centered, interdisciplinary higher education that is a high-quality alternative to large research universities. Many of these new Asian liberal arts institutions are moving from the phase of institution-building to a second phase in their history where collaborating with international partners and finding their place on the global stage becomes a priority, providing an additional impetus for the new PALAC alliance.

This new consortium could also engage in collaborative research on public policy and provide a shared commitment to advancing more global perspectives in liberal arts teaching and research in the Pacific region. The consortium can fill a gap in the international higher education landscape by creating a liberal arts analog similar in geographical scope to the APRU, but instead focused on collaborative research and teaching in the liberal arts context. As mentioned earlier, many liberal arts consortia have worked together to establish study-away sites, and to focus in the US context on issues related to liberal arts pedagogy.

However, a gap exists in exploring how the liberal arts model translates in different cultural contexts, and how to fine tune the American approaches to be true to liberal arts in China, Hong Kong and other Asian cultures. This topic has been the subject of many international conferences in recent years, and a review of global liberal arts approaches in emerging new liberal arts programs in China, Japan, Singapore and India was presented as part of the conference at Beijing University in January 2020 (Penprase, 2021). The roots of liberal arts in the Western European culture are exemplified by the medieval *quadrivium* and *trivium*, and in the Chinese culture are exemplified by the Confucian tradition of developing “virtue” through the concept of the Great Learning or *daxue*.

These different roots contribute to distinctly Asian and Western approaches to modern liberal arts, and in many cases, these new institutions in Japan, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore blend Asian and Western elements of liberal arts curriculum and pedagogy in new ways. These new models of liberal arts are being developed at many of the institutions within PALAC, and the alliance has the potential to collectively study and share the advances in liberal arts within the PALAC institutions. With this motivation in mind, the Pacific Alliance of Liberal Arts (PALAC) was established in 2021. This essay further describes the goals, details of the establishment of PALAC, some of the initial projects planned by PALAC, and longer-term goals for global impact.

THE GOALS OF PALAC

The different cultures within the Asia, combined with the new types of pedagogy made possible by liberal arts, is providing an exciting opportunity for redefining liberal arts in a more global way. Within China, liberal arts programs associated with large universities include Yuanpei College at Fudan University, Boya College at Sun Yat-sen University and Xinya College at Tsinghua University. These programs are imbedded within the larger university much as are the “University Colleges” within Europe. Entirely new universities

in China that are based on liberal arts approaches include Duke Kunshan University and NYU Shanghai, which are both members of PALAC. In Hong Kong, Lingnan University, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Baptist University, all feature liberal arts approaches. In Vietnam, the new Fulbright University Vietnam is pioneering liberal arts approaches as Vietnam's first liberal arts college.

By establishing entirely new standalone universities based in liberal arts, Asian higher education can develop broader concepts of education that move beyond "transactional" approaches rooted in vocational training. As described by Harris (2011), a tension exists between the need for a university to orient itself between economic needs, as opposed to a university providing new orientations for society to help promote a democratizing and growing economy.

The new liberal arts institutions within PALAC can work collectively to communicate the long-term payoffs from such approaches, and the benefits from moving away from specialized and top-down educational models to promote more agile and creative thinking within their graduates. It is hoped that one of the functions of PALAC will be to facilitate this articulation of the values of liberal arts in ways that are persuasive across Asia, and that contribute to the sustainability of liberal arts in the Pacific region and globally.

PALAC includes nine top liberal arts institutions from China, Hong Kong, the US, Canada, and Vietnam, as listed in Appendix I. Appendix I also includes the founding date of each institution and the number of students enrolled. The median size of the PALAC institutions is 1650 students, and the median founding date for PALAC institutions is 2001. These characteristics give the PALAC organizations a tendency toward innovation, as many are new "startup" institutions, and institutional cultures built around a tight-knit community made possible by the small size.

PALAC members are now collectively developing new innovative educational environments and opportunities for collaborative education and research among their faculty and students. The group of colleges share a commitment to comprehensive interdisciplinary training, experiential learning, a focus on creativity and critical thinking, seminar-style instruction, undergraduate research experiences, individual development and personal mentoring, and an emphasis on global citizenship.

As an example, Soka University of America centers its institutional mission on building global citizenship and is organized within broad areas of inquiry instead of by departments. Another example is the Fulbright University Vietnam YSELI Academy, which provides leadership training for future leaders across Southeast Asia, which is designed to "strengthen ties between the United States and Southeast Asia and nurture an ASEAN community" (Fulbright University Vietnam 2023).

The University of Puget Sound has been leading innovation in engagement with Asia among liberal arts colleges since 1970, with its PacRim program, which provides six months of immersion in Asia that integrates experiential learning and internships (University of Puget Sound 2023). Pomona College is launching its new Global Pomona program, which mirrors the mission of PALAC as it seeks to respond to how "the world is ever more interconnected in confronting vast problems and pursuing the search for solutions" which makes liberal arts education "essential" since it is "creative, holistic and rigorous" and it prepares students "to lead the way in an ever-changing world" (Pomona College 2015b).

The goal of PALAC is to share innovations from its individual member institutions, while building a larger collective intellectual capacity and impact that the individual institutions would not be able to achieve on their own. The new PALAC Alliance is designed to be small and nimble to enable significant progress on collaborative projects with demonstrable added value for the member institutions. The group of

institutions together can significantly advance the research and education aligned with the UN SDG's and to promote global citizenship and create cultural bridges across the Pacific region. As one example, the Hong Kong Baptist University in Hong Kong has developed a Global Virtual Hackathon to advance the UN SDGs in 2021, entitled "A Sustainable New Normal" (HKBU 2021). The HBKU hackathon provided the blueprint for a possible new PALAC hackathon focused on global climate change. Another example is the DKU iGEM team, which is an interdisciplinary effort to use genetically engineered microbes to help fight antibiotic resistant pathogens, which advances the UN SDGs, 3, 9, and 17 (DKU 2023).

It is hoped that with PALAC, additional teams can be developed to further advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals. A further example is the new Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) fund at NYU Shanghai to help promote global sustainability in research and education as well as the broader impacts of these activities (NYU Shanghai 2022).

Initial Projects

Initial conversations and follow-up discussions with academic leaders showed a significant interest to collaborate in four areas. By selecting initial projects that are of mutual interest among many of the institutions, it is hoped that 10-20% of the faculty of the individual colleges may be committed to active involvement in these initiatives. Some of the initiatives that appeared suitable for PALAC include the following:

- (1) Experiential field schools, similar to EnviroLabs Asia (Claremont Mckenna College 2019) or the Global Clinic program (Harvey Mudd College 2023) at the Claremont Colleges, or shared research programs for students similar to the Keck Geology Consortium, which brings together an extensive group of liberal arts colleges fostering student and faculty research during summers. Such field schools could replace or complement traditional student exchange and operate outside of the usual academic semester calendars, avoiding scheduling difficulties. Additional "study institutes" in summer or winter break periods could rotate among the institutions. Online collaborative research among the institutions could operate in parallel to the regular academic year offerings. In the first years of the program, groups of institutions could initiate a series of online study institutes that would bring together faculty and students in discussion of common challenges facing their home countries and the Pacific Region, and ways to research solutions toward implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- (2) Shared online courses and faculty development programs. The consortium could share best practices in course design, curriculum development and pedagogy, comparable to the US-based Liberal Arts Collaborative for Digital Innovation, which gathers ten liberal Arts Colleges together for coordinated development of online learning capacity. Discipline-specific and pedagogy-specific resources at individual colleges tend to be limited by the small faculty; shared instruction can enhance the curricula for institutions through shared development of online courses in languages, skill-building summer courses for students in mathematics and writing, select advanced and highly specialized courses not available at many campuses, and online tutoring and programs in languages and other subjects. The Alliance can also provide a platform for frequent discussions among faculty and students within member institutions and can provide a mechanism for promoting intercultural exchanges and developing a stronger sense of global citizenship among students.
- (3) Credit-bearing programs during summer or other off-calendar periods could be offered to students within the Alliance to leverage the specific strengths of member institutions or share opportunities to experience these diverse geographic and cultural environments represented

within the Alliance. Short winter-break or summer courses could be developed on topics such as sustainable cities, management of water and air resources, entrepreneurship, global climate change, and the needs of marginalized communities within the region. After some time, such credit-bearing programs could be applied toward a joint degree program in *Ocean Stewardship* or *Pacific Studies*, or other subjects not offered at individual institutions.

- (4) Promoting a liberal arts education across the Pacific Basin, advising on issues of public policy from a liberal arts perspective, and enhancing the cultural dialogue among the cultures and countries within the Pacific Basin. A strategic collaboration with the APRU would make these engagements more effective and powerful. Examples of existing research institutes within institutions include the *Pacific Basin Institute* at Pomona College (Pomona College 2015a) and the *Pacific Basin Research Center* at Soka University of America (Soka University of America 2023).

INITIAL YEAR IMPLEMENTATION

From the initial planning discussions with academic leaders, an administrative structure was developed which included Thomas Schneider as founding Executive Director and Bryan Penprase as founding Academic Director. This structure was based loosely on the initial arrangements of the APRU, which began in 1997, and was governed by a rotating secretariat, who was one of the APRU university presidents. In APRU, the secretariat then sponsored the costs of staffing and operations from the President's office and handed off these responsibilities to other APRU presidents. By 2007, an international APRU secretariat was set up, and was located in Singapore and is now based in Hong Kong. Discussions with the APRU founding COO suggested adopting a simple administrative structure for PALAC at beginning to reduce bureaucracy. A plan to rotate the meetings of PALAC among the member institutions was also advised to share the costs and administrative burden (Cheng 2021).

Like APRU, the management of PALAC was envisioned to rotate through each of the PALAC institutions for a two-year term, with additional institutions taking the lead role as Academic Director, and hosting a meeting for the PALAC alliance. Other administrative tasks for PALAC in the first years were placed within the lead institution, which in the first years was set at Soka University of America (SUA).

The costs of the PALAC administration were borne by the lead institution, SUA, which provided administrative support, IT support for the website development and funding for the in-person meeting. To formalize membership in PALAC, the member institutions were given a prospectus "concept paper" that described the goals of PALAC, and each signed a Statement of Founding that provided a description of the administrative structure of PALAC, the host institution, and other details. Each of the 9 institutions then returned the signed Statement of Founding with the signature of the President or Chief Academic officer to authorize PALAC to represent the alliance officially. These initial costs were borne by Soka University of America in the launch year, but with a longer-term goal toward shifting toward a more traditional consortial arrangement supported by either external funding from a grant, or from dues collected by member institutions.

To publicize PALAC, Penprase and Schneider wrote an article in Times Higher Education featuring PALAC in September of 2021. The article made the case that liberal arts in Asia will benefit from peer support from a consortium such as PALAC, and provided some of the initial goals for PALAC (Penprase and Schneider 2021). A PALAC website was developed, using a domain and hosting outside of any of the PALAC institutions (to assure continuity with changes in leadership) with the domain name of pacificalliance.org, with the costs for the web server borne by the HBKU/UIC. To help increase awareness

of PALAC, Penprase gave a presentation on PALAC at the Times Higher Education Liberal Arts Forum on June 23, 2022 (Times Higher Education 2022), and a LinkedIn page was created to begin posting social media articles about liberal arts in Asia in mid-2022. During academic year 2021-2022, discussions via zoom continued to refine the initial project selection for PALAC, and to develop specific working groups for implementation in the academic year of 2022-2023.

The first in-person PALAC meeting was held at Soka University of America on June 3-4, 2022, and featured John Sexton, President Emeritus of New York University, who gave a plenary talk entitled “A Twenty-First Century Case for a Liberal Arts Institution.” Sexton also was present on both days of the meeting to provide advice and suggestions for the new alliance. Travel funding from SUA was provided to two of the representatives to offset their costs for attending, as well as funding for John Sexton’s appearance. The meeting included 20 in-person attendees representing six of the nine PALAC institutions, from Vietnam, China, Canada, and the USA, with about 20 additional attendees online, as the meeting was conducted in “hybrid” mode. The entire set of presentations, representing all the nine PALAC institutions are all available on the PALAC website (Soka University of America 2022).

SECOND YEAR PROJECTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the discussions from the first in-person PALAC meeting, several top priorities were identified. Administrative governance and other procedures were discussed, and it was recognized that a more formal mission statement, governance documents and financial support mechanism would be needed to sustain PALAC in the coming years. These steps are ongoing, as are plans for seeking external funding to support the activities of PALAC. The goal in these discussions was to find priorities for PALAC that were shared from as many of the partner institutions as possible, to assure widespread participation across the alliance. To also share the responsibilities for managing the alliance, PALAC developed a plan to rotate the governance of PALAC on a semi-annual basis, and to also rotate the venue for a PALAC meeting among the member institutions.

The specific projects which appeared most feasible in the second year, centered around two main areas – collaborative instruction and research on global climate change and its impacts on marginalized communities, and faculty exchanges. To provide a bit more information on these two topics, some specific ideas which will be implemented in the coming year are outlined below.

Collaborative instruction on global climate change

As many of the institutions within PALAC have expertise on the topic of global climate change, and since the Pacific Region is both impacted by global climate change, as well as a source of the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases generated by the dynamic economies of Asia and North America, the possibility of a global engagement between China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and the USA on global climate change seemed an ideal focus for PALAC. To begin implementation, SUA will begin to develop a new website featuring shared instructional materials, new imagery from NASA on global climate change, and articles on global climate change.

This project is planned to develop into the Pacific Alliance Project and a new online textbook known as the Pacific Alliance College Press, with an editorial board that includes members from PALAC institutions. To begin the project, SUA faculty members George Busenberg and Robert Hamersley will work with the SUA group to gather materials for the online resource and aided by visiting faculty member Hung Phan (formerly from Fulbright University Vietnam), a series of online discussions on the topic will be conducted with students and faculty at SUA and other PALAC institutions in Vietnam and China.

Additional projects that are hoped to be developed in the coming year include:

- Hackathon bringing students together across PALAC to work on topics of mutual interest, perhaps related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.
- Global dialogs among students across PALAC focused on pressing issues, such as global climate change.
- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) courses for exchange (could include both synchronous and asynchronous coordinated courses).
- Collaborative offerings for summer courses among PALAC institutions (could be a mix of in-person and virtual experiences).

Faculty Exchange

To begin implementing faculty exchanges, openings at the PALAC campuses for visiting instructors are being shared, with the hope that faculty members on sabbatical or visiting the other campus can offer a course or a lecture to begin a series of exchanges. Since many of the PALAC institutions are quite new, having the mix of experienced and new faculty meeting and sharing ideas will be a great avenue for faculty development. Faculty opportunities at Fulbright University Vietnam and Duke Kunshan University are already being shared within PALAC, and procedures for posting opportunities and arranging for housing and payment for the visiting faculty are being worked out. In the coming year it is hoped that PALAC can create many opportunities for faculty exchange that would include:

- Faculty exchanges for short-term teaching and for sabbatical
- Coordinated efforts within PALAC administration for sharing experiences and solutions
- Student exchange programs for experiential learning in Jan. term and short immersions as well as semesters

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

After the initial years of founding, it is hoped that the PALAC alliance can serve a vital role in articulating how liberal arts education translates into the different cultures and countries in the Pacific Region. Already the emergence of new liberal arts institutions in China, Singapore, Japan and India have redefined the nature of liberal arts in exciting ways that have integrated cultural elements from each country into the canon of texts that are read, and the priorities of the institution that reflect the needs of the local cultures and economies of Asia. These efforts also are shaping the ways that new technologies such as AI and biotechnology in the exponentially changing economies of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" and liberal arts approaches are vital in making more ethical and sustainable development of these technologies in the Asia-Pacific Region (Penprase, 2011).

Understanding the value and cultural rooting of liberal arts institutions in a diverse mix of countries will help clarify the essential nature of liberal arts education in liberating the talents and creative capacities of students and faculty. In addition to the educational projects mentioned above, the larger collective body of expertise within PALAC should enable something like a "meta-university" that has larger critical mass in several areas. With the advances of online and remote learning, solidified by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to easily connect communities and students in meaningful ways has become technologically easier than ever. By developing avenues for collaboration in instruction and communication, as well as an online infrastructure to enable fast and frequent communication between PALAC students and faculty, new research and new insights will emerge that would have been impossible on the campuses in isolation.

The global PALAC “meta-university” in some ways mirrors Clark Kerr’s notions of the multiversity (Kerr 2001). Kerr’s 1961 work, *The Uses of the University*, described the multiversity as one that “draws on many strands of history” to create interlocking communities centered on the diverse intellectual cultures proliferating in the increasingly specialized research universities of the 20th century. Kerr’s multiversity describes the competing fractionalization within individual research universities, which can be a source of chaos and competing interests that often are irreconcilable.

A closer description of the potential PALAC “meta-university” was provided by John Sexton, who in building the NYU global portal campuses in Shanghai and Abu Dhabi described how global universities can become “incubators for a secular ecumenism” by building “a community of interlocking communities” (Sexton 2020). It is hoped that the intense residential communities within the PALAC campuses can work together to create this PALAC meta-university, based on its “community of interlocking communities.”

To accelerate the process of development of this collective research capacity, PALAC will also explore development of new types of online infrastructure for sharing procedures for managing research. These types of infrastructure could include many kinds of resources, both administrative and academic. An online academic commons for PALAC will facilitate and accelerate this development, and minimize barriers for productive research collaboration among our members. As outlined by Pomona College President Gabrielle Starr, some of the steps that might be particularly helpful in moving toward collective research capacity in PALAC would include working out the details for a unified and shared understanding of the following:

- a. IRB alignment/facilitation
- b. Consideration of export controls
- c. Shared understanding of peer review standards, perhaps aligned with the Hong Kong principles of the World Conference on Research Integrity (WCRIF 2022; Wager and Kleinert 2013)

It may also be possible to share significant research resources among PALAC institutions, due to the increasingly distributed and online nature of much of today’s scientific research. Examples of specific research infrastructure that could be shared among PALAC institutions includes:

- a. Shared resources for high performance computing
- b. Shared resources for instrumentation/analysis
 - i. DNA sequencing
 - ii. Spectrometry
 - iii. Others
- c. Online instrumentation with remote operation, such as
 - i. Remotely operated telescopes
 - ii. Oceanographic research instruments
 - iii. Weather and pollution monitoring stations

With the collective resources made possible by PALAC, it will be possible for the group of liberal arts colleges to advance both in teaching and research. Through the shared academic commons, it will also be possible to have shared case studies of environmental changes in our regions with impacts on marginalized communities, and a mechanism for publishing research with peer review among the PALAC institutions. With this collective capacity the institutions within PALAC should be able to advance and achieve far more than they could individually and create impact on global research and education far greater than would be typical for institutions of their small size. Ongoing discussions are also underway to add member institutions in key regions of the Asia-Pacific (Japan, Malaysia, Australia, etc.) to allow

PALAC to fully implement its initiatives and to take advantage of the different teaching schedules within the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

An additional possible emphasis for PALAC will be to help increase the capacity of each institution for more effective academic administration, perhaps involving visits or exchanges among administrators. Together these steps will help PALAC provide both increased advocacy for the liberal arts across the Pacific, and more support towards the fledgling institutions as they develop beyond their “launch” in to mature and sustainable universities and colleges.

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Appendix I: Listing of PALAC institutions
 (more information available at <https://pacificalliance.org/>)

Location	University or College	Year of Founding	Undergraduate Enrollment	website
Canada	Quest University Canada	2007	600	https://questu.ca/
China	NYU-Shanghai	2012	2000	https://shanghai.nyu.edu/
	Duke Kunshan University	2013	1000	https://dukekunshan.edu.cn/
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Baptist University	1956	10,000	https://uic.edu.cn/en/
	HKBU United International College	2005	6000	https://uic.edu.cn/en/
USA	Soka University of America	2001	540	https://www.soka.edu/
	Pomona College	1887	1650	https://www.pomona.edu/
	University of Puget Sound	1888	2650	https://www.pugetsound.edu/
Vietnam	Fulbright University Vietnam	2016	500	https://fulbright.edu.vn/